

# "I enjoy the diversity of the work too. Histopathology reports have a tremendous impact on a patient's care and treatment"

Dr Azam also likes the problem-solving aspect of histopathology as well as the variety and that she gets to work across the hospital with many different people.

## Dr Ayesha Azam

### Specialty trainee (ST2) in histopathology

#### Employer or university

Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Ayesha Azam

### How I got into the role

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When I started as a foundation doctor, I knew very little about the specialty of histopathology. I came across it during a cancer multidisciplinary team meeting with surgeons, physicians, radiologists, pathologists and a cancer nurse specialist, and was fascinated by the tremendous impact these tiny tissue sections on a piece of glass have on the diagnosis and treatment of patients. I undertook a taster day in histopathology and it sparked my interest because of its problem-solving nature.

To explore it further, I decided to do a foundation 2 (F2) rotation in histopathology. I liked the variety of the work, which includes: analysing tissues - biopsies, fluids and resections - under the microscope; 'cut-up' of tissues in the laboratory (the examination and dissection of surgical resection specimens to select the most appropriate samples for microscope slides); and some detective work involving post-mortems.

## **What I do**

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In my first year in histopathology, I received a structured one-week introduction to it as a specialty, including learning how to set up and use a microscope, and lectures about different 'systems' in the body so I could familiarise myself with how a 'normal' organ looks and how to spot some common diseases.

Now, my day-to-day duties include examining histology and cytology specimens under the microscope and preparing a clinical report which I then discuss with my supervisor. I also spend a few hours every week in what we call the 'trim room' to perform cut-up of [biopsy](#) [1] and resection specimens.

Attending team meetings with other healthcare professionals and performing post mortem examinations are also an important part of my duties.

## **The best bits and challenges**

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I like the problem-solving aspect of histopathology. We examine each case systematically to arrive at a diagnosis which obviously helps determine the treatment the patient receives.

I enjoy the diversity of the work too. Histopathology reports have a tremendous impact on a patient's care and treatment and I like the challenge of making important decisions in patients' lives.

The work is very variable as we work with almost all the specialties in the hospital.

## **Life outside work**

### **Expand / collapse**

The working hours are good in histopathology with no on-call working, which means I enjoy a good work-life balance.

## Career plans and top tips for others

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If you're considering a career in medicine, histopathologists are currently in demand and there are excellent teaching and research opportunities.

The specialty training for histopathology is provided on a 'run-through' basis which means it's possible to obtain a Certificate of completion of training [2] (CCT [3]) after five years without having to apply to get a place on specialty 3 training (ST3).

There are rapid advancements in digital pathology too with the aim of moving from physical 'slides' to digital images.

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**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/pathology/histopathology-doctor/real-life-story-ayesha-azam>

#### Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Biopsy> [2]

[https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Certificate\\_of\\_completion\\_of\\_training](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Certificate_of_completion_of_training) [3]

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#CCT>